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Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

I. Introduction

1. In its letter dated 20 December 2010 (S/2010/661), the Security Council agreed to extend the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) until 31 December 2013 and requested me to report on the implementation of the revised mandate of UNOWA every six months. The present report covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2011. Taking into account the streamlined mandate of the Office, it provides an overview of national, cross-cutting and cross-border developments in West Africa and outlines the activities undertaken by UNOWA in preventative diplomacy and awareness-raising on emerging threats and challenges to regional peace and stability and its efforts aimed at promoting consultations and synergies at the subregional level, in cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other regional and subregional partners, to promote peace and stability.

II. Developments and trends in West Africa

A. Political trends

2. The reporting period witnessed significant progress towards greater stability and peace resulting from, inter alia, the end of the transition processes in Guinea and the Niger and the election-related crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. Meanwhile, threats to constitutional order and governance that were noted in my previous reports, such as the increasing trend of unconstitutional changes of Government, seem to be receding. No crisis of that nature was observed during the period under review, and West African democratic prospects continued to be further consolidated. In that regard, it is hoped that the decisive and concerted action undertaken by the international community to bring an end to the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire sent a clear signal to the subregion and beyond. Yet, the possible impact of the recent developments in North Africa on the democratization process in West Africa needs to be evaluated carefully and kept in perspective. Indeed, there are lingering perceptions of the emergence of potentially new political and social crises, which cannot be discounted in West Africa. As in North Africa, such crises could emerge if there is resistance to change and the aspirations of the people of the region, in

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particular the youth, for democratic consolidation and social justice remain unfulfilled, especially during future electoral processes.

3. Despite the relatively positive trends, the overall political situation was marked by a number of election-related crises. Although important improvements in the organization and conduct of electoral processes have been achieved in the recent past, election-related tensions and violence remain a source of concern in the region. The polarizing nature of party politics and the relatively weak national institutions which had not always forged consensus on the management of electoral bodies and procedures, which were observed in a number of countries, continued to threaten stability in the subregion.

4. Nine elections have been held across West Africa since my previous report (S/2010/614). Parliamentary and presidential elections were held in Benin, the Niger and Nigeria, while parliamentary elections were held in Cape Verde. The Governments of the Niger and Nigeria also organized local elections. International observers noted improvements in the conduct and management of elections and reported relatively few irregularities compared with past electoral processes. However, a number of electoral aspects, including voter registration and the release of results, remain highly contentious and constitute important potential triggers of violence. As a result, the subregion has continued to witness tensions between political parties, which in some instances resulted in deadly confrontations between security forces and activists.

B. Economic, social and humanitarian trends

5. The economic situation of the subregion presents a mixed picture. As in other parts of the continent, there are indications that West African countries would benefit from renewed international growth, albeit at a rate lower than the average for sub-Saharan Africa.

6. With regard to the Millennium Development Goals, recent data show that several countries of the region have fallen behind the targets, particularly in relation to poverty reduction, owing to a number of factors, including endemic and rising unemployment and the effects of continued soaring food and energy prices. Furthermore, the continued rise in food and fuel prices contributed to the deterioration of the living conditions of large segments of the population, thereby constituting a potential threat to the stability of the States concerned. Economic performance in the long term may therefore be largely determined by the degree of political stability in the subregion.

7. Instability in Côte d'Ivoire and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya have had a particularly great impact on food security, especially in the countries of West Africa that had already been severely affected by the consequences of the food and pastoral crisis in 2010. The influx of displaced populations is exacerbating that situation; this is especially the case for Liberia, where Ivorian refugees are hosted, and for the northern regions of Mali and the Niger. The crisis in Côte d'Ivoire also had an impact on economic migration from neighbouring countries, mainly Burkina Faso (with an estimated 200,000 returnees and third-country nationals), Mali (with an estimated 150,000 returnees and third-country nationals), Guinea (with an estimated 50,000 returnees and third-country nationals) and the Niger, which prevented affected households from receiving their usual remittances and thereby decreased

their income. In addition to the influx of refugees and returnees from Côte d'Ivoire, the Governments of Mali and the Niger are also coping with the return of migrant workers from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. In Mali, the number of returnees reached 10,238, while there were 100,000 returnees in the Niger. The present crisis in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is likely to have a further adverse impact on local livelihoods in West Africa, especially in Mali and the Niger, as a result of the significant drop of the remittance inflow from migrant workers.

C. Security trends, including drug trafficking and organized crime

8. The weak rule of law and high levels of poverty in a number of West African countries contributed to incidents of organized crime. Some of those countries serve as transit points for large-scale trafficking of cocaine from Latin America towards European and North American markets. While preliminary findings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicate a decline in the number of seizures related to maritime cargo and flights from West Africa to Europe, there are indications that traffickers have modified their techniques and found new ways of sending cocaine to Europe, including through West Africa, which have not yet been detected. Available data show that heroin trafficking through West Africa increased in the first five months of 2011. During the reporting period, the trend regarding the production in West Africa and trafficking to Asia of methamphetamine was confirmed. Money-laundering, particularly from drug trafficking, also continues to be a source of major concern in the subregion. Its corrupting effects have further weakened already fragile State institutions and may finance armed or terrorist groups operating across West Africa and the Sahel.

9. Insecurity in the Sahel region has increased significantly, including terrorist attacks against national armed forces and the kidnapping of foreigners. The nature of the insecurity has evolved from attacks against individuals to actions against State institutions. The sophistication shown in the conduct of operations reflects an increase in the operational capacities of terrorist groups. However, Sahelian States lack the resources necessary to address terrorist and criminal threats effectively and guarantee a safe environment for their populations.

10. Growing insecurity, a deteriorating humanitarian situation and concerns about the cross-border impact of the Libyan crisis have triggered a renewed political drive to increase regional cooperation to stabilize the Sahel area. Consultations have intensified among the Governments of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger in order to bolster regional cooperation in the field of security and ensure economic and social development in the border areas, as well as to improve the well-being of the local population and ultimately address the root causes of insecurity.

11. Renewed diplomatic contacts and improvement in the relations between Algeria and Mali were observed following the visit of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Soumeylou Maiga, to Algiers on 27 April. That visit was followed by the decision of the Government of Algeria, announced on 28 April, to allocate $10 million in emergency funds to finance development projects in northern Mali in support of efforts to combat extremist groups in the area. A special meeting of the joint chiefs of staff of the armies of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger was held in Bamako on 29 April. This meeting signalled an important step towards the operationalization of the Joint Operational Chiefs of Staff Committee, which was

established to fight terrorism in the Sahel band at a meeting held in Tamanrasset, Algeria, in August 2009. During the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, held on 20 May in Bamako, the four countries agreed to meet every six months in order to expand their dialogue on issues related to the development of the border areas and to facilitate regional integration. They also decided that the Government of Algeria would host a regional summit on security and development, to which international partners would be invited.

D. Trends on human rights and gender issues

12. During the reporting period, fundamental freedoms such as the freedom of speech, expression and assembly further improved in many countries of the subregion. There have also been significant efforts to promote the equal participation of men and women in public affairs in some countries, including in Mali, with the appointment of its first female Prime Minister, Benin, Cape Verde, Guinea and Senegal, among others, and to implement Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). However, the failure to apply a human rights-based approach throughout tense electoral processes and volatile political environments has led to violence, post-electoral tensions and human rights violations in several West African countries. In particular, the resurgence of police brutality; extrajudicial killing of civilian populations by armed elements, especially in the context of repression of civil unrest; house burning; ethnic and religious violence; forced displacement; and violence against women and children represented important setbacks in some countries of the subregion.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

A. Carry out good offices and special assignments for conflict prevention

13. During the period under review, the UNOWA good offices concentrated both on managing election-related crises and on ensuring the return to civilian rule and constitutional order. Those efforts focused more specifically on Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and the Niger.

Benin

14. The presidential elections, initially scheduled for 27 February, were postponed to 6 March owing to delays in the electoral process, in particular the finalization of the permanent computerized voters list. Along with ECOWAS and the African Union, my Special Representative carried out a good offices mission on 3 March with a view to defusing tensions. National stakeholders, including former Presidents Zinsou, Soglo and Kérékou, had previously initiated discussions with presidential candidates in an attempt to resolve the impasse related to the electoral process, in particular the voters list. The ECOWAS/African Union/United Nations joint delegation encouraged national stakeholders to find consensual solutions to the pending challenges related to the holding of the elections in order to preserve peace, security and stability and consolidate the democratic achievements of Benin.

Following consultations with the opposition, the delegation suggested a postponement for a few days of the presidential elections without violating the principles of the Constitution.

15. Following the joint ECOWAS/African Union/United Nations mission to Benin on 3 March, the Constitutional Court authorized the postponement of the presidential elections to 13 March. In the meantime, the Parliament adopted a law authorizing the revision of the voters list. Despite the mistrust that had emerged during the preparatory phase between the political stakeholders, the election took place on 13 March under peaceful conditions. The ECOWAS and African Union observers certified the election as generally free and transparent despite some shortcomings in the process.

16. Before the release of the provisional results, which gave 53 per cent of the votes to President Yayi Boni and 35 per cent to Adrien Houngbédji, both the ruling party and the main opposition coalition claimed victory, thus generating tensions, which resulted in isolated incidents. Amid calls by national stakeholders for calm, President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, Chair of ECOWAS, travelled to Benin and stressed the need for a violence-free electoral process. The ECOWAS Commission also issued a statement appealing to all presidential candidates and their followers to abide by the results of the election. At the end of the thirty-ninth ECOWAS ordinary summit in Abuja on 24 March, the Heads of State and Government called on the candidates to respect the final results to be announced by the Constitutional Court.

17. On 29 March, the Constitutional Court rejected the appeals and proclaimed the re-election of President Yayi Boni. My Special Representative attended the swearing-in ceremony, which was held on 6 April. Legislative elections took place under peaceful conditions on 30 April. The electoral process thus ended with the inauguration ceremony of the sixth legislature on 16 May.

Côte d'Ivoire

18. As part of the United Nations efforts to assist in finding a peaceful solution to the post-election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, I maintained close contact with key African leaders to encourage them in their efforts to secure a peaceful outcome to the crisis. My sole objective was to ensure that the democratically expressed will of the Ivorian people was respected. As part of the United Nations efforts to consult with our African partners, I dispatched my Special Representative for West Africa, accompanied by my Principal Deputy Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, on a special assignment to Angola, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Ghana, Mali and South Africa from 18 to 25 January. During the consultations, held at the highest levels, my Special Representative further explained and clarified the role of the United Nations in the elections in Côte d'Ivoire, especially with respect to the certification process. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining cohesion within the international community, particularly among ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations, on the basis of the agreed principled positions adopted by the organizations.

19. At a meeting held on 28 January in Addis Ababa on the margins of the African Union Summit, the African Union Peace and Security Council decided to establish a high-level panel, supported by a team of experts, to propose a political solution to the crisis, based on the relevant decisions taken by the African Union and ECOWAS. As agreed upon with the African Union, my Special Representative for

West Africa cooperated closely with the African Union and contributed to the work of the team of experts and of the high-level panel. It was in that context that my Special Representative participated in the successive meetings of the team of experts and the high-level panel, held in Abidjan (8 and 9 February), Addis Ababa (17 February and 9 March) and Nouakchott (19 and 20 February and 4 March). That contribution was recognized by the African Union Peace and Security Council in its communiqué issued following its 225th meeting, held on 10 March.

Guinea

20. The people of Guinea eventually succeeded in conducting their presidential polls with significant support from the international community. The first President elected democratically since the independence of Guinea, Alpha Condé, was sworn in on 21 December 2010. During his investiture ceremony, attended by the Deputy Secretary-General, President Condé highlighted his commitment to tackling the numerous challenges faced by Guinea, including improving the economy, providing employment opportunities and promoting the rule of law, good governance and national reconciliation. The President also committed to reforming the security sector, which would result in restoring people's trust in the defence and security forces.

21. Following the establishment of a new Government, the International Contact Group on Guinea, in which the United Nations was represented by my Special Representative, met for the final time on 10 February. Participants agreed on the need to establish a Group of Friends on Guinea, which would follow up on the initiatives undertaken by the International Contact Group. While acknowledging the substantial support received from the international community in relation to the transition process, Prime Minister Mohamed Said Fofana expressed the hope that international support would remain strong even after the end of the transition period in order to consolidate the democratic process, build institutions and promote economic growth and development.

22. At the request of the Government, Guinea was officially added to the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission on 23 February. My Special Representative met with the Chair of the Guinea configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Sylvie Lucas of Luxembourg, during the latter's first visit to Guinea from 3 to 10 April. During the visit, the Chair noted a broad consensus among national and international stakeholders that the three priority areas identified by the Government of Guinea: national reconciliation, the reform of the security sector and youth and women's employment, were both relevant and urgent. The Chair also took note of the need to continue to consolidate democracy in Guinea and stated that the upcoming parliamentary elections were a critical step in that direction, along with the need to sustain dialogue between the Government and all political stakeholders, improve governance and boost the economy.

The Niger

23. The reporting period witnessed the successful conclusion of the transition process in the Niger and the country's return to constitutional order a year after former President Mamadou Tandja was ousted from power. Indeed, the holding of peaceful legislative and presidential elections on 31 January, followed by the run-off of the presidential elections on 12 March, signalled the effective implementation of

the timetable set by the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSRD) led by Lieutenant-General Salou Djibo.

24. As part of continued United Nations efforts aimed at ensuring a smooth transition, my Special Representative, together with the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, travelled to Niamey on 13 and 14 January, prior to the parliamentary elections and the first round of the presidential elections. On that occasion, they held discussions with national and international stakeholders, including Lieutenant-General Djibo, Prime Minister Mahamadou Danda and several presidential candidates, with a view to impressing on all parties the need to respect the agreed schedule of the transition process and ensure that the legislative and presidential elections took place in the best possible conditions.

25. Out of 10 candidates who contested the first round of the presidential elections on 31 January, 2 candidates emerged as the front runners: Seini Oumarou of the National Movement for the Society of Development (MNSD) and Mahamadou Issoufou of the Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS). The second round was held as planned on 12 March. Mr. Issoufou was elected President of the Republic with 58 per cent of the votes for a five-year term. His contender, Mr. Oumarou, received 42 per cent of the votes. Observers from ECOWAS, the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the European Union commended the smooth and orderly conduct of the polls. They declared that the elections had been conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner.

26. I wish to commend the conduct of the people of the Niger during the election. Indeed, as Mr. Issoufou had declared, the people of the Niger had shown great political maturity. Similarly, CSRD should be commended for its conduct in overseeing a successful transition and free and fair elections. It is worth noting that on 16 March, Mr. Oumarou announced that he had accepted the results, congratulated President Issoufou and wished him success in governing the country. I took note of the fact that all the leaders of the country had stressed the importance of national reconciliation. Equally important, the handover between CSRD and President Issoufou proceeded smoothly. Soon after the conclusion of the electoral process and in the spirit of reconciliation, Lieutenant-General Djibo, President Issoufou and Mr. Oumarou travelled together to Abuja to attend the ECOWAS Summit, held on 23 and 24 March.

27. My Special Representative represented me at the swearing-in ceremony of President Issoufou, which took place in Niamey on 7 April. On that occasion, President Issoufou solemnly vowed to respect and defend the Constitution that the people of the Niger had freely given themselves, faithfully perform the high duties that the nation had assigned to him, not be guided by partisan interests and respect human rights. He also pledged to devote all his forces to the search for and the promotion of the common good, peace and national unity and to preserve the integrity of the national territory. President Issoufou also outlined the main priorities of his mandate, which included reducing hunger, alleviating poverty and fighting corruption and insecurity. He also pledged to allocate one quarter of the State budget to improving the education system. On 10 May, the Court of Appeals of the Niger cleared former President Tandja, who had been under house arrest since February 2010, of corruption charges and ordered his release from jail.

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

28. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, of which my Special Representative serves as Chair, continued to show progress towards the implementation of the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002. At its 27th session, held in Yaoundé on 10 and 11 March, the parties expressed a wish to assume stronger ownership over the process and challenged themselves to complete the substantial part of the demarcation work by November 2012, including the construction of another 1,056 boundary pillars. They also agreed on a new structure that would give them a leading role in the management of future demarcation works. Furthermore, the parties agreed to carry out joint sensitization missions, accompanied by the United Nations, to facilitate acceptance of the demarcation by local communities. On 17 May, surveyors began to assess some of the most inaccessible areas of the land boundary. To date, out of the estimated 1,950 kilometres, 1,600 kilometres have been formally agreed upon. Cameroon and Nigeria have also acknowledged that the Working Group on the Maritime Boundary had fulfilled its mandate, ending the implementation of the ruling of the International Court of Justice in respect of the maritime boundary.

29. The Follow-up Committee on the implementation of the Greentree Agreement of 12 June 2006 regarding the withdrawal and transfer of authority in the Bakassi peninsula met in Geneva on 24 February and on 5 and 6 May. The parties acknowledged during both meetings that a peaceful atmosphere generally prevailed in the zone of Bakassi and that the conditions in the area had gradually improved amid efforts by the two countries to initiate joint security patrols and enhance transboundary security in the area, as assessed during the field visits by the joint observers group.

30. My Special Representative continued to work with the United Nations country teams of Cameroon and Nigeria in order to pursue an integrated approach towards supporting the establishment of confidence-building measures and joint economic programmes for the benefit of the populations living along the boundary. To that end, the Government of Cameroon, along with representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization undertook a needs assessment mission in the border area in May and June 2011. A similar exercise is expected to be conducted soon in Nigeria.

B. Enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security

Elections and stability

31. As election-related tensions and violence continue to be a source of concern in the subregion, UNOWA convened a high-level regional conference on elections and stability in Praia from 18 to 20 May. The initiative built upon the process launched during a regional workshop on the role of security institutions in electoral processes

organized by UNOWA and held in November 2008 in Conakry, during which the need for a holistic approach to elections had been emphasized. The main objectives of the Praia conference were to draw lessons from electoral processes and to analyse their implications for crisis prevention and peacebuilding in West Africa. The conference was hosted by the Government of Cape Verde and organized in partnership with the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the UNDP Regional Office for West Africa. It received the support of ECOWAS, the African Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the European Union and the International Peace Institute. Participants included high-level representatives of Governments of the subregion and international and regional organizations, as well as election management bodies, national security forces, civil society, academic institutions and the media.

32. The conference adopted the Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa, which stressed, inter alia, the need for continuing efforts to harmonize the normative and institutional arrangements governing elections at the regional level. The Declaration also underlined the need to promote human rights and gender in the administration of electoral processes and advocated for strengthening national legal frameworks in relation to the role of security forces and the media in elections. The participants committed to working together for the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Praia Declaration.

33. The outcome of the regional conference was three-pronged: (a) the United Nations and its regional partners assessed electoral best practices and norms, including the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance adopted in 2001; (b) a set of policy recommendations was developed on critical issues such as the financing of elections, the functioning of the electoral commissions, the role of the media and of the security sector, and human rights and gender issues; and (c) subregional capacities were assessed with a view to addressing potential election-related challenges.

Security sector reform

34. During the reporting period, UNOWA, while continuing to cooperate closely with ECOWAS in the context of the implementation of its political framework and its plan of action on security sector governance and reform, specifically focused its efforts on supporting the security sector reform process in Guinea, at the request of President Condé. Following consultations with ECOWAS and the African Union, the former head of the joint ECOWAS/African Union/United Nations security sector assessment mission, General Lamine Cissé, was dispatched to Guinea from 20 to 24 January to discuss possible next steps with the Government in the implementation of the reform. Following the visit, the authorities decided to hold a national seminar on security sector reform and to establish a national technical committee within the Ministry of Defence to act as focal point for the planning and organization of the security sector reform implementation phase, including the preparation of the seminar.

35. The national seminar on security sector reform, organized by the Government of Guinea with the support of the United Nations, was held in Conakry from 28 to 31 March. President Condé opened the seminar. UNOWA worked closely with the United Nations Resident Coordinator, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

of the United Nations Secretariat and the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery to ensure a coherent approach by the United Nations. The United Nations provided advisory assistance to the technical committee before and during the holding of the seminar, including through the deployment of an international security sector reform expert by the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery in February and of two security sector reform experts by UNOWA with resources from the Department of Political Affairs from 13 March to 6 April.

36. The seminar provided the opportunity for the first official national dialogue on security sector reform among representatives of the security and defence sector, the Government and civil society organizations in Guinea. On that occasion, participants reviewed the progress achieved regarding the preliminary implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the joint African Union/ECOWAS/United Nations security sector assessment mission conducted in 2010. They also initiated discussions on the development of a national road map to ensure implementation of the recommendations. The seminar also served as a platform for identifying national capacities and areas in which Guinea would require assistance from its international partners. The seminar resulted in the establishment of a national steering committee on security sector reform. While the authorities are working towards the finalization of the road map for the implementation of security sector reform, bilateral and multilateral partners such as France, the United States of America and the European Union are supporting concrete quick-impact activities on the ground. The United Nations has also established modalities to ensure the overall coordination of international efforts in support of the Government-led process.

Drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime

37. Since my previous report, the United Nations, working in tandem with regional partners, mobilized additional support for and facilitated the implementation of the ECOWAS regional action plan to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa. In parallel, specific activities were devised to operationalize the West Africa Coast Initiative, a joint initiative undertaken by UNOWA/Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNODC and INTERPOL, which aimed at building capacity in support of the ECOWAS regional action plan.

38. To that end, my Special Representative developed and strengthened partnerships with a number of institutions. He held discussions with the European Union in Brussels on 31 March and participated in the ministerial meeting on transatlantic drug trafficking of the 2011 Group of Eight Summit, held in Paris on 10 May. The ministerial meeting adopted a political declaration and a plan of action aimed at reinforcing transatlantic cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking, particularly among the three most affected regions, Latin America, West Africa and Europe. On that occasion, both the Executive Director of UNODC and my Special Representative sought support for the West Africa Coast Initiative as part of the wider international strategy to fight against drug trafficking.

39. UNOWA, UNODC, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and INTERPOL continued the implementation of the West Africa Coast Initiative in Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone; its implementation in Côte d'Ivoire was suspended owing to the crisis there. In Sierra Leone, a Transnational Organized Crime Unit was established and equipped and is now operational. The unit has

already been involved in an investigation of marijuana trafficking, which led to the seizure of a large quantity of marijuana by the Police on 16 May. The Transnational Crime Unit in Guinea-Bissau, became operational through the appointment of personnel and the provision of premises in April 2011. In Liberia, the Minister of Justice endorsed the memorandum of understanding for the establishment of the Transnational Crime Unit on 20 May 2011.

40. Emphasis was also placed on consolidating the strategic orientation of the West Africa Coast Initiative programme. On 22 February, the four partners that constitute the Initiative approved the internal three-tier steering and coordination mechanism, including the High-level Policy Committee, which was established to provide strategic coordination, direction and guidance to the overall programme. The inaugural Policy Committee meeting took place in Dakar on 20 June with my Special Representative serving as its Chair. The objectives of the meeting were to maintain coherence between the ECOWAS action plan and the West Africa Coast Initiative Freetown Commitment on Combating Illicit Trafficking of Drugs and Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa; oversee at the strategic level the political, organizational and financial aspects of the Initiative's implementation; support strategic collaboration and cooperation among the various national, regional and international actors; and undertake resource mobilization efforts with a view to supporting the implementation of the Initiative. The Policy Committee welcomed the commitment of countries in West Africa to fighting transnational organized crime and praised the collaboration which was established between the Initiative and ECOWAS. It agreed to continue supporting the ECOWAS regional action plan to address the growing threat of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa. After reviewing the progress achieved and challenges faced in the implementation of the Initiative in the four pilot countries, the Policy Committee also decided to send a technical mission to Côte d'Ivoire and to call for a donor conference to support concrete activities, to be funded by a West Africa Coast Initiative basket fund under UNODC management. The Policy Committee also considered expanding the Initiative's activities to Guinea, subsequent to the decision of the partner agencies to include Guinea in the Initiative. To that end, it decided to dispatch a special technical and needs assessment mission to Guinea and to invite the Government of Guinea to attend the next meeting of the Policy Committee.

C. Promotion of good governance, the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming

41. With regard to the promotion of human rights and gender mainstreaming in peace and security-related activities, UNOWA benefited from its strengthened partnership with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, pan-African institutions and civil society organizations. As part of the United Nations efforts to fight impunity, my Special Representative visited Guinea with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 14 and 15 March. On that occasion, they encouraged the Guinean authorities to establish a truth, justice and reconciliation commission and an independent national human rights institution. A presidential decree established the institution on 17 March.

42. The sixth consultative meeting of Heads of United Nations human rights offices in West Africa was hosted by UNOWA on 16 and 17 March. The High Commissioner attended the meeting, which focused on human rights in electoral

processes, the fight against impunity and gender and human rights. Considering the volatile security situation in several countries of the region, the participants agreed to include the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009) in joint human rights activities in the subregion. The meeting also allowed for an enhanced partnership among ECOWAS, UNOWA and UN-Women in support of the implementation of the ECOWAS regional plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the United Nations Campaign to End Violence against Women.

43. UNOWA facilitated the activities of the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa in the framework of the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) through monthly meetings which aimed at enhancing the stakeholders' capacities in mainstreaming gender, in particular in peace and security strategies. UNOWA also published the 2011 edition of the directory of institutions working for peace and security in West Africa, an initiative of the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa. That action was meant to further improve synergies and harmonize actions of cross-sector actors, institutions, organizations and agencies working directly or indirectly to facilitate sustainable peace and security in the West African region.

44. In collaboration with ECOWAS and in partnership with the Government of Guinea, UNOWA organized a partners' round table on 15 April in Conakry on progress achieved and challenges encountered in the implementation process of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) in the 16 countries of the subregion. The event brought together 130 high-level participants, and the opening ceremony was addressed by President Condé. The Governments of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone had already launched their national action plans, while the Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria were in the process of developing their respective plans. The round table resulted in the launching of a resource mobilization strategy for the implementation of the regional plan of action on Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). Participants undertook to provide technical and financial support for the implementation of the plan of action at both the country and subregional levels.

D. Inter-institutional cooperation

United Nations inter-institutional cooperation

45. As previously indicated, a number of joint initiatives were undertaken with United Nations peace missions, agencies, funds and programmes based in West Africa, as well as with the Peacebuilding Commission and OHCHR. Those initiatives included activities related to security sector reform, election-related violence, human rights and gender and the work of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission.

46. In addition, the two meetings of the heads of the United Nations peace missions in West Africa, held in Dakar on 28 February and 28 May respectively, provided a framework for further harmonization of United Nations action for the promotion of stability in the subregion. On 28 February, the heads of mission in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia met and discussed the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire and its impact on the subregion, in particular on the cross-border implications on Liberia. The heads of mission also discussed a number of cross-

cutting issues affecting peace and stability in the region and agreed to strengthen collaboration, especially with regard to elections, the fight against drug trafficking and security sector reform.

47. On 28 May, the heads of mission in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone noted with satisfaction the positive developments in West Africa since their previous meeting. They noted in particular the end of the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire and the successful holding of democratic elections in Benin, the Niger and Nigeria, the promising perspective of peaceful, free and fair elections to be organized in Cape Verde and Liberia before the end of the year and the revitalization of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the fight against insecurity in the Sahel. Aware that the West African subregion remained fragile despite these positive developments, the heads of mission resolved to be vigilant and to maintain close contacts among their respective missions, especially on cross-border and cross-cutting issues, including within the framework of the Policy Committee of the West Africa Coast Initiative.

48. My Special Representative also convened the eighth meeting of the regional directors and heads of United Nations agencies based in Dakar. They reviewed developments in the subregion and the role of the United Nations in that context, with a special focus on Guinea, the Niger, Benin, Burkina Faso and Senegal. They also discussed the humanitarian impact of the crises in Côte d'Ivoire and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya potential election-related instability, as most countries in the subregion are scheduled to hold elections within the period from 2011 to 2013.

Cooperation with regional and subregional partners

49. In addition to good offices activities undertaken jointly with ECOWAS during the period under review, my Special Representative participated in the thirty-ninth ordinary session of the Authority of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, which was held on 23 and 24 March 2011 in Abuja. The thirty-ninth ordinary session provided an opportunity to exchange on ongoing cooperation initiatives between the two institutions, including with regard to Côte d'Ivoire, joint good offices efforts and the organization of a high-level regional conference on elections and stability in Praia from 18 to 20 May. It should be noted, however, that as a result of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, which drained ECOWAS resources and attention, a number of joint technical initiatives between the two institutions could not take place as planned.

IV. Observations and recommendations

50. The presidential election in Guinea and the subsequent inauguration of the first democratically elected President provides an opportunity for the country to address long-standing challenges to peace and security, including national reconciliation, human rights violations and political and socio-economic governance. It also provides an opportunity for the country to deliver tangible dividends to its people. I commend President Condé for his commitment to addressing the most pressing issues and encourage him to engage in constructive dialogue with all national stakeholders in order to overcome social and political tensions while consolidating the gains achieved so far.

51. I am encouraged by the important steps taken by the new Guinean authorities to accelerate the implementation of security sector reform on the basis of the joint assessment conducted in 2010 by the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union. The United Nations will continue its efforts to respond to the country's call for improved coordination of the international activities and programmes on security sector reform. Given that governance of the security sector is at the heart of State reconstruction and the consolidation of public institutions in several West African countries, I take this opportunity to encourage ECOWAS to finalize and adopt the subregional political framework and plan of action on security sector governance and reform currently under discussion. UNOWA stands ready to assist in this process, if needed.

52. With the inauguration of Mr. Issoufou as President of the Niger on 7 April, the Niger successfully returned to constitutional and civilian rule a little over a year following the overthrow of former President Tandja. I commend the work of the transitional authorities, and in particular Lieutenant-General Djibo. I welcome this new democratic dispensation even as I am sure the new authorities of the Niger will continue to need sustained support from the international community to effectively advance the well-being, development and security of the people of the Niger as well as to strengthen the country's democratic institutions.

53. I cannot fail to acknowledge the modest progress achieved by the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and the commitment displayed by both Cameroon and Nigeria during their seventeenth session to meeting the challenge of completing the demarcation of the boundary between the two countries. I also congratulate the parties for their commitment to accelerating the implementation of the ruling of the International Court of Justice. I look forward to the conclusion of those processes within the time frame allocated. I know that there are difficult decisions that lie ahead but I have never doubted the political will of both countries to accomplish the task at hand.

54. I also welcome the adoption of the Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa, which was endorsed during the regional conference held in Praia from 18 to 20 May. I urge all relevant actors in the region, in particular ECOWAS, its member States and civil society in West Africa, to work closely with the United Nations system in order to implement its recommendations effectively. I wish once again to reassure the leaders of the region that, as part of the United Nations commitment to consolidating democracy in West Africa, UNOWA will continue to encourage and actively support these efforts.

55. While I acknowledge the progress made in the fight against transnational organized crime, including illicit drug trafficking in West Africa, in particular through the West Africa Coast Initiative, I once again wish to stress the need for the countries of the subregion to consolidate the strategic direction and to strengthen regional ownership on that matter. I also urge partners to provide the required financial support to the Initiative and to the ECOWAS regional action plan.

56. With respect to the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, many stakeholders have called for a stronger role of the United Nations in addressing the recent return of mercenaries and other cross-border illegal movements, including of weapons, from Côte d'Ivoire into Liberia and other neighbouring countries. A subregional strategy to address this challenge, with the support of UNOWA, is therefore essential.

57. There have been some indications that weapons have been transferred from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and fallen into the hands of terrorists in the Sahel band, risking destabilizing the whole region, which continues to be threatened by terrorist activities. Another potential source of instability is the significant drop of the remittance inflow from migrant workers, which will put a strain on local livelihoods. In order to address those persisting and emerging humanitarian and security challenges, Sahel countries should strengthen their collaboration. In that regard, I am encouraged by the strengthened cooperation among the Governments of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger. I welcome the current momentum and the calls for a summit on security and development in the Sahel band. My Special Representative will continue to mobilize the United Nations system in support of this initiative as well as to accompany any possible outcome of the proposed conference.

58. The steps taken by West African States to operationalize the regional plan of action on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) are encouraging. I also welcome the support given by partners to the regional action plan and the adoption of national action plans by an increasing number of countries in the subregion. I encourage all the Governments of the subregion to develop and adopt similar plans. The United Nations, in particular UN-Women, stands ready to provide assistance in this respect.

59. The administration of an effective and impartial justice system represent a major challenge in West Africa, not only in the context of the efforts by Governments to promote good governance and the rule of law, but also in terms of preventing conflicts and creating the conditions for sustainable peace and security. In order to assist the countries of the region to overcome those challenges, UNOWA and the West Africa Regional Office of OHCHR intend to organize a regional conference on impunity by the end of 2011 in order to mobilize and engage regional partners to advance the fight against impunity. The conference will also seek to establish a road map to assist in the effective implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

60. With the end of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, the restoration of constitutional order and democracy in Guinea and the Niger and peaceful and fair elections in Benin and Nigeria, the subregion is witnessing a new momentum towards peace and democracy, with the strong support of United Nations entities present in the field, including UNOWA. While paving the way for stability, reconstruction and development, those encouraging achievements have regrettably not completely reversed the potential of new rounds of instability, which remain a reality in several countries, as illustrated by recent developments in Burkina Faso and the simmering tensions observed in other countries of the subregion. UNOWA will continue to support initiatives aimed at consolidating those gains that are consistent with its revised mandate endorsed by the Security Council in December 2010. The Office will also concentrate its activities on addressing cross-border and cross-cutting challenges to peace, human security and stability, in particular election-related crisis and violence, challenges related to security sector reform and transnational criminality, notably drug trafficking and terrorism.

61. In conclusion, I wish to reiterate my appreciation to the Governments in West Africa and to the ECOWAS Commission, as well as to other subregional and regional institutions, for closely cooperating with UNOWA. I would also like to

extend my gratitude to the various entities of the United Nations system active in West Africa, including the heads of peace missions, the heads of United Nations regional offices, country teams and other relevant entities for their dedication and support to UNOWA. Finally, I would like to thank my Special Representative, Said Djinnit, and the staff of UNOWA and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for their tireless efforts to promote sustainable peace and security in West Africa.